

RURAL DISTRICT OF BINGHAM.

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19 JUL 1943

Interim Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the
Years 1941 and 1942.

Council Offices,
BINGHAM.

June, 1943.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Bingham Rural District Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministry of Health advise that the annual reports of Medical Officers of Health during the war should be reduced to a record of happenings of outstanding importance, especially those arising out of war conditions. At the same time it is pointed out that in the interests of national security no information should be given which might be useful to the enemy. Bearing in mind these restrictions my interim annual reports for the years 1941 and 1942 become little more than tokens, few points of major importance in Public Health falling due at present for comment. A fuller report covering the war years will be rendered when hostilities cease.

While no big Acts of Parliament affecting Public Health are due for comment some new activities have arisen through departmental orders and circulars. The mass immunisation of children against diphtheria and the increased powers in dealing with scabies and other verminous conditions are examples. Again, there have been many emergency measures taken with regard to the milk supply.

While the war has interrupted the normal activities of the Public Health staff it has not reduced the volume of work nor simplified it. The Sanitary Inspector finds many problems and much of his work cannot reach a satisfactory outcome because of shortage of labour and supplies.

Further comments are made under headings in the report.

I am,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

Wm. B. WATSON.

Medical Officer of Health.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS.

Medical Officer of Health.

J.B. Watson, L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S., D.P.H.

Sanitary Inspectors.

J.G.W. Hurst, M.S.I.A.

(at present on active service in
the R.N.R.).

C. G. Williams, M.S.I.A.
(vice Mr. Hurst).

Surveyor.

C.W. Kendrick, Cert.R.S.I.,
M.I.Mun. & Cy. E.

VITAL STATISTICS.1 9 4 1.

Birth Rate (per 1,000 population) 13.6 (England & Wales 14.2).
 Crude Death Rate (per 1,000 population) 11.1 (England & Wales 12. 9).
 Corrected Death Rate 9.2
 Death Rate of Infants under one year of age (per 1,000 live births). 32.8 (England & Wales 59).

There were no maternal deaths.

1 9 4 2.

Birth Rate (per 1,000 population) 13.9 (England & Wales 15.8).
 Crude Death Rate (per 1,000 population) 10.0 (England & Wales 11.6).
 Corrected Death Rate 8.2
 Death Rate of Infants under one year of age (per 1,000 live births). 21 (England & Wales 49).

There were no maternal deaths.

Any comments on these figures must be made with reserve because of the inaccuracy of war-time figures of population, and these disturbances of population themselves affect the incidence of births and deaths. The Registrar General has ceased to issue a factor for use in estimating the corrected death rate but the factor in use before the war has been used in calculating the rates shown above. The birth rate for 1941 is the highest since 1933 and it was surpassed in 1942. That for England and Wales was the highest since 1931. Both the crude and corrected death rates for 1942 are the lowest of which I have records - extending back to 1929.

WATER.

Problems with regard to both quality and quantity continue to arise in the parishes not on the Nottingham supply and each has to be met according to the special circumstances and having regard to the likelihood of an extension of the mains to all parishes after the war. A curious thing is the discovery that water has been laid on during the war to premises which before the war were the subjects of complaints, the remedy of which had been proving difficult to attain. People are undoubtedly becoming more desirous of a plentiful supply of good water. This and the stimulation the farming industry is receiving will create an insistent call for an extension of the mains as soon as possible after the war.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.

The war has brought some difficulties and more may yet arise. The village of Shelton was a victim in 1942 of the well-intentioned efforts of the land drainage authorities to improve the condition of agricultural land. The lowering by dredging of the bed of the river Smite resulted in the drying-up of the village wells and all of these had to be deepened.

CAMPS, TENTS AND CARAVANS.

In spite of the war - or perhaps because of it - the number of civilian camping sites has increased and nearly always no prior regard is paid to licensing or the sanitary facilities aimed at by the local authority. It seems likely that immediately after the war there will be a big increase in camping and the use of temporary dwellings and a reconciliation between the encouragement of an open air life and the preservation of amenities will have to be effected. At present the position is unsatisfactory and some standard will have to be arrived at which will be fair to all and avoid inconsistency. All local authorities ought to have bye-laws which will help to preserve the public health and safeguard the aesthetic interests of the majority who do not live in tents and caravans. A measure of uniformity between authorities seems desirable if we are to avoid the old practice of simply "moving on" the offence.

EVACUATION.

Throughout the two years under review many problems arose but unfortunately none menacing the public health or, indeed, appearing to influence the sickness rate amongst children. Most of the problems were either administrative or social and the existence in the District of two hostels served to solve most of the difficulties arising from social mis-fits. The hostels have run remarkably smoothly and nearly all the worries would have been avoided if greater recognition had been paid to the necessity to have adequate staffs in hostels. All the more credit is due to the loyal workers who have carried on under great difficulties and made the national interest their chief aim.

Much has been written about the need for social improvement brought into prominence through evacuation but more will probably appear after the war. Much valuable information could be obtained by the collection, and collation, of reports from all reception areas on such aspects as the physical condition of children on arrival and after a period of evacuation, and their behaviour in billets and in hostels, along with the suggestions of welfare officers as to any future plans for the temporary stay of town children in the country.

SCABIES.

In October, 1941, the Scabies Order was issued by the Minister of Health under the Defence (General) Regulations, giving Medical Officers of Health additional powers to deal with scabies and verminous conditions, including compulsory cleansing. Scabies has increased tremendously during the war and the Order is designed to enable the Medical Officer of Health to track down those who have the disease but do not pursue adequate treatment. Since the issue of the Order a great deal of work (which does not seem yet to have had much effect on the incidence of the disease) has been done by Public Health Authorities, especially in urban areas. In this rural district the lack of staff has precluded any organised scheme for dealing centrally with the scattered cases notified from time to time by the County Medical Officer.

MILK.

It is impossible in short compass to discuss the complicated situation in which milk production and distribution have now been placed by the war-time aggravation of the old problem of reconciling an ever-increasing demand for milk with a corresponding realisation of a need for improvement in its quality. The most exacting efforts are being made by the numerous official bodies concerned but cows' milk remains - and will always remain - a food which it is almost impossible to provide "clean" - unless its condition after treatment by heat can be called "clean". At the moment the economic aspect of "dirty" milk, with the appalling waste through souring, has ousted the aspect of safety from first place in the view of those responsible for the Nation's food supplies.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

The principal features over the two years were:

- (a) The occurrence in the summer of 1941 of 7 cases of enteric fever. This was part of a general incidence in most parts of the Country and was pretty definitely traced to the infection of bulk supplies of a certain confection. The activities of the Ministry of Health and some of the larger local authorities resulted in a very desirable improvement in the purity of the commodity in question and 1942 passed without a recurrence of the trouble.
- (b) The District was fortunate in having no cases of cerebro-spinal fever in 1942 and only 3 in 1941 in spite of a continuation in the Country generally of the increased incidence prevailing for some years.
- (c) Measles kept simmering throughout the two years, now boiling up in one parish, now in another. Whooping Cough, while present, had only 13 notifications in 1941 and 18 in 1942. Notification of this disease is probably often overlooked by practitioners and of course they are not always consulted by the parents. There were no deaths from whooping cough and only one from measles. Scarlet Fever was prevalent in most parts of the Country in 1942 but in this District there were only 24 cases notified.

On the whole therefore the local record is a good one during the period under review. The problem of hospital accommodation has been greatly helped by the opening early in 1942 of a temporary hospital at Mansfield Woodhouse under

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.(Cont'd).

the auspices of the South Notts. Joint Hospital Board. Although its availability has been somewhat interrupted by staffing and other difficulties and it has so far been able to take only cases of scarlet fever, it has eased considerably the problem of hospital treatment. The provision of extra beds at Basford for cases of scarlet fever has also been a most helpful contribution.

DIPHTHERIA PREVENTION.

The work of inoculating as many as possible of the child population commenced in April, 1941, and has met with a good response. After the first intensive drive, when the services of general practitioners and one of the assistant County Medical Officers were enlisted, the flow of applicants has been easily dealt with by the Medical Officer of Health, with the continued assistance of members of the local Civil Defence Casualty Services. It ought to be put on record how valuable has been such assistance which enabled a big job to be quickly and successfully tackled in the early days and smoothly continued afterwards. The team of Civil Defence helpers merited the praise they received from doctors and others throughout the District. Besides the actual work in the schools most of the clerical work and a good deal of the preparation was done by these workers. The flow of applicants tends to cease unless active propaganda is kept up. It must be remembered, however, that now most of those who are open to conviction have already consented and babies reaching one year of age will make up the bulk of new-comers. The County health visitors have recently been in touch with all mothers in the District and have reported that most of those likely to consent have now come forward. The figures about to be submitted to the Ministry of Health at the end of June, 1943, are:

Estimated percentage of children in area under 5 years of age inoculated either through public scheme or privately - 55; aged 5-15 - 86. The percentage for the combined groups is 77.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Health ask for the percentage of pre-school children to be calculated on the total child population between birth and 5 years of age but as children are not inoculated until they reach the age of 12 months a figure more representative of the work done is the percentage calculated on the number of children between 12 months and 5 years. This figure is 69 and the percentage for the combined ages, 12 months to 15 years, is 81.

It will be necessary to give another injection to children when they start school if they received their previous inoculation in their second year.

The number of cases of diphtheria notified in 1941 was 13 and in 1942 2 (neither of these in children).